

Chapter III

ON THE SARAMACCA RIVER

ON THIS, the second morning after the burial of 414 •
Sedefo's brother, Bayo started downstream from
the village of Djamongo before daybreak. With all
the vigor of his youth and the freshness of the morning, he
pushed off from shore, and with sharp, short strokes ran
his canoe into midstream and through the foaming rapids
below the village. In and out, and in, went the paddle, until
he was past the rough water which made a tumbling fortifi-
cation for his village. His eyes wandered back for an instant
as he sat there, taking in at a glance the dark outlines of the
two silk-cotton trees which reared themselves above the
line of matted jungle, and the gleam of natural clearing on
the opposite, uninhabited bank, where trees stood singly
here and there above the low underbrush. "Ai-yo!" he
exclaimed half aloud, thinking how well it was with his
village. It was good to have been born where twin silk-
cotton trees stood and across the river from where the
Apuku—the little people of the bush—held council at
night. It was the Apuku, to be sure, who had seen to this
pleasant open place, and no man, whatever his need, would
put to use this land which the gods had accommodated to
their own purposes.

Those rapids, too, were higher than any on the lower
river, he thought, as he paddled vigorously in the still [133]
water. To have thought of the rapids at all, while going

KIBEL DESTINY

484 through them, would have meant courting the displeasure of the spirit which animated the troubled stretch, and would have been dangerous. He was a Man Nengere and knew all this well, for was he not ready to marry Dida any time now? He would have to wait as yet, but perhaps during the next planting her breasts would come, and then in a month, two, three, she would be ready to marry. He was, in fact, in the mood even to cast about for a second wife, though his marrying her would have to wait many years. All that would come, for what with the money he already had earned, and the sums he would get for the wood he might bring down the river later, and this money the Bakra would give him, he would have enough to pay for the hammock, the cloth pangi, the handkerchiefs, the bracelets and beads, and whatever else a man needed to give to his woman and her mother for a fine marriage.

484 Going through this stretch of still water, which Bayo always found dull, he thought of this and that, for there was no work for his muscles but the monotony of the dip and stroke of the paddle. Going upstream it was different. There the challenge of the slipping pole-stick against submerged slime-covered rocks made a man prove himself. It spoke to the warrior blood in him, which found no outlet in these quiet times. But this was only idling, and his mind found pleasure in wandering, especially if it happened, as now, to be dark enough to make it worthless for him to look about for the things that grew and stirred in the bush.

Yes, it would be almost three hours before the sun was high, and when it stood there—he indicated the place in the heavens to himself with his eye—he might be loading the Bakra's boats to go up river, for word had come from top-side that the Mamadam would be safe in a few days, and now if the Granman meant for the Bakra to get to the upper river, he would be sending word down almost any time. And he, Bayo, was ready for the journey.

484 Here in the blue canister, which he had bought in the city
574 on the Queen's last birthday with part of the money he had

ON THE SARAMACCA RIVER

got for the timber he and his great-grandfather had floated down the river, he had two fine cloths. One was older and was intended for visiting the villages on the way, and the new one was for the Granman's village. For this occasion, too, he was saving a pair of newly woven garters, though he would wear the two strands of small coral and yellow beads in some of the villages on the way. At Lamé, for instance.

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Ai-yo! He would see to it that he looked well at Lamé, for Lamé had handsome women, and at Lamé the women knew how to love. His own powerful love obia had come from Lamé, and there it was in his canister and there beside it was a potent fighting obia which his uncle, who was surpassed by few on the river in the strength of his obia spirits, had made for him. Some day, when Bayo was older, he, too, would know all these secrets, for his uncle had given him some of his gods, and at dances he already showed that he had a strong spirit. Until that time came, he had the obia from Lamé to win for him the love of his fellow men, and should it not avail against the magic of some curly fellow who wished him ill, then he had the other which would serve him in trouble. And on his upper arm was his Kromanti obia—the magically potent iron band—which, by tightening, would warn him when trouble was impending. That was the way to go through life—a man asked the gods to help him meet whatever might come, the good spirits with good, and the bad with yet greater evil.

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Up above, whirling past him in the pale dawn, the parrots flew, making a screeching chorus in the stillness, and rousing him to the murmur of the next rapids which he was approaching.

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What was that? A boat. Going downstream, he was soon alongside it.

"Tio, greetings," he called to the man, speaking in the subdued ceremonial voice.

"Thank you, tio," answered the older man, for he addressed a stranger.

REBEL DESTINY

484 And after they had inquired of each other's health, they
576 were well past each other, making in opposite directions,
521 but continuing their colloquy.

Bayo said, "I am on my way to the Bakra's camp. I am to be one of his paddlers. Today we start up the river. He is going to the Granman's country."

"I am going to Tunkahai. My sister's son died on the Marowynne. His wife is to come out of mourning. We shall have good dancing tonight."

Bayo's boat was disappearing in the bend of the river.

"Adiosai, adiosai-o. Adiosai, adiosai-ol" he sang out his goodbye, pitching his voice so low and so well that it seemed to penetrate not only the entire river, but the very thickness of the forest which hemmed it in. The response came back to him as a faint, cadenced song.

"Ooo oo oo . . . oo!" he sang out, placing his hand against his mouth to make the sound carry. And the answering call came back true as a bird's call.

484 Now he was in the rapids again, and stood at the stern with dilated nostrils and head thrown forward. When he was through the whirling eddies and in quieter water once more, he adjusted his loin cloth carefully and sat down and began paddling. The green-heart trees were beginning

[137] to bloom. Fine trees. They belonged to another clan. He and his great-grandfather went for their timber below. There was plenty of timber in this bush of theirs. The gods of the bush were strong, and the ancestors had done well for the country. In a week these channels would be gone. Right about him everywhere jagged rocks would show. In a week, or before then, they would play the drums for the gods of the river, sounding their call to the sun to come and dry and warm them, and the sun, hearing the call, would send his fire to the river banks, and the rains would end.

Was that a boat overtaking him? The cool of the morning was a time to be about. Who was that?

[576] "Tio, greetings," he said to the man, who seemed in a great hurry.

"Thank you, tio. . . ."

ON THE SARAMACCA RIVER

Ah, but they knew each other.

Bayo began paddling faster to keep up with him.

"There is to be a council meeting at Gankwe. I had to hurry away last night, and I must get back there in time. We must have permission from the spirit of the dead man to go back to work, and Sedefo has to find out if he can start up the river, and if he does go, we must all pray to the ancestors because four men will be going from Gankwe, and the *Gran Sembe*—the village elders—have things to decide . . . "

Now, fearing that he might have said too much, he doubled his speed, and Bayo understood that the other preferred to be alone. They belonged to different clans, Bayo to the same as the headman of the tribe, and the Gankwe people to another. Gankwe was sending important men to take the Bakra up the river. The chief's own brother, Asikanu, was to go, although it was said he was being sent out of the way while his adultery case was being settled. There had been talk about this case up and down the river. The Gankwe clan head had given a chief's sanctuary to the offender because he was his own brother, people said. Well, if the injured husband committed suicide as he threatened, and sent a kunu to the family of the brother, and even the village and clan, it would be an ugly thing. But so it was with trouble about women. It was as they said,

*"Sleep is death
Woman kills man."*

He half chanted the proverb and smiled, for he looked forward to his trip up the river with an eye to a visit in Lamé, where the women knew how to love. And he began singing the seketi song which he liked so well. Both the melody and the words were old, but he sang the refrain as if it were quite his own—whatever hardships there were on the river, at Lamé one slept with the women!

At the village of Akunkun an old man and a boy of about nine were at the landing place ready to start. Bayo

REBEL DESTINY

484 [501] recognized the coat of a village chief, and by the size of the boat he knew that it belonged to the upper river, far, far beyond the stretches he had yet penetrated.

576 [484] He spoke the greeting in the faintest of whispers, out of deference to a man of age and rank, and stopped his boat, for this village belonged to his own clan, and it was here that he would get from his mother's sister the cassava bread which she had got ready for his journey up river.

[262] He got out of his boat gently; decorum demanded that he subdue his energy before the man of position. His palms rested on his knees for an instant, as he stood slightly inclined before the older man, and what questions he answered, he did in speech which was punctuated with the ceremonial stammering demanded by the occasion. He had put his toga-like cloth over him and stood hesitating whether or not to take his paddle to the village with him, for he was so well known here that this settlement was almost as familiar to him as his own. But at last he leaned down and took up his paddle. This mature formality, in a village where he was still often looked upon as a boy, was prompted perhaps by this meeting with the chief, or by the new feeling of confidence he had, since he was taking the Bakra's boat up the river. But here he was, going up the embankment with the firm, slow step of the stranger.

484 [501] The old chief had already started, having first made his sacrifice of rum to the spirit of his boat by squirting it over the finely carved head which appeared in relief on the prow. And now, as he guided his canoe with the sure strokes of his large steering paddle, he sang his prayer.

"Kediamo, Kediampon,
Mother of the River,
Sacred ancestors, and my a'ka,
I am taking this journey down the river,
I am going to the city,
Grant that I travel in safety,
Grant that the trip be joyous,
Grant that I meet with friends,

ON THE SARAMACCA RIVER

*Grant that I walk with strangers in friendship,
Grant that the white man deal fairly with me.
Great Sky God,
Mother of the River,
Sacred ancestors,
I thank you."*

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Before the sound of the old chief's voice had died away, Bayo was on the bank again with the great disks of cassava bread in his arms. He covered them carefully and was on his way. His aunt had provided nicely for him. She had given him a large bottle of palm oil as well, and now, if he could but shoot a monkey or a macaw while going up the river, he would have excellent food. The Bakra would be certain to have a drink or two for his paddlers, and some leaf tobacco; and, though he himself was not old enough to snuff tobacco, he would save it for a gift to the father of his betrothed. He went back to his seketi.

*"Ma, a Lamé
A sib' ko' de muye."*

On the bank of the next village several women were at work washing clothes. Were they young? Ah, but he must hurry. Twice he had been overtaken.

"Tia, odi! tia, odi! tia, odi!" He spoke to each of the three women separately and finished his "Adiosi" with an extra flourish, for he knew as he paddled away that the circle of cicatrized kamemba and the snake incised in the small of his back below it would gleam in the sun and look alive to the women who watched him make off.

That Lamé obia was a powerful thing!

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At Gankwe they had been up all night, for yesterday was the eighth day after death, and that night the ceremony of B'oko Dei had to be cared for—until night met day, the villagers said, there would be Anansi stories, and then, after the dawn, the elders would hold council, for one's

REBEL DESTINY

501 "It is not good," he said aloud to us. "Its balance is not
609 right. Look, it rolls . . . and besides, I have a kunu. I will
go up in my own boat."

And so it was. Sedefo took his own boat up river, and another Gankwe boat was obtained, and there were four boats instead of three, and eight paddlers instead of six.

"Ya-hai! Kunu is costly for the white man as well as the black," Bayo said to Bibifo, his great-grandfather, for it was not his father, nor his grandfather, as he had later promised, who appeared to steer the boat in which Bayo was taking the Bakra and his woman up the river.

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502 Bayo was at his best on the river. He loved it, and it
484 treated him well. In the prow of the boat, swinging his pole-stick hand over hand, he steadily urged the boat upstream against the current, and sang as he poled.

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"A-yai-yo,
A-yai-yea,
Money is finished in Suriname
Lower Cayenna took it!
A-yai-yo,
A-yai-yea."

[533] Over and over he repeated the seketi, with tantalizing variations in rhythm and melody on the traditional air, to which he knew so many sets of words. In and out went the pole-stick. In, until it struck the sand with a soft caressing glide, then a hard push, and three short steps back along the boat until Bayo's hand reached the upper end of the wood, and a final thrust, then pull, and over, and in, and once again the three short steps.

The other boats had got ahead. In the distance close to the bank they followed one another.

"Mbwoyu, mbwoyu—Hurry!" said old Bibifo in back.

Bayo turned and grinned. "Ai, mbwoyu, mati, mbwoyu—Yes, hurry, friend, hurry," he twitted his great-grandfather,

ON THE SARACACCA RIVER

but he did face about, and forgetting his seketi began to pole in earnest.

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In a few moments his body glistened with the exertion, and over the circle and snake of kamemba in the small of his back the perspiration ran down in a trickle. When he had almost caught up he slackened his speed, and he and Bibifo talked about the river. Old Bibifo knew the river well. He was born beyond the Granman's country. A snake swam across the path of the boat, Bayo said. It was good luck. "See, look," he called. His eyes were sharp. The old man saw it, too, and then he called to us. There, close to the shore, a little ahead of us, a constrictor twined its tail about a liana, hanging head down, with a salamander slowly disappearing into its mouth. There was a slight jerk, the liana shook, the snake swallowed, and another bit of the salamander was out of sight.

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Farther ahead we heard the report of a gun, and the crying of the mate of the wounded bird followed us for a long while. Bayo and Bibifo identified each cry, called by name the things that grew, planned about their timber rafts when they got back, until the next rapids were reached and passed and the conversation could be resumed, and then they talked about things which they did not care to have the Bakra know, and though they spoke none of the words of their ritual language, we could not understand anything they said. It was not until later that we learned to work out some of the elisions in their speech.

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A strip of sandy beach showed where a village stood, and as we passed it, we could see the azang, the spiritual guard of palm fronds, preventing evil spirits from entering the village. We saw also a strip of white hanging from the end of a stick which had been put up for the ancestors, and beyond, the low shelter for the roughly carved and weathered image holding an obia pot on its head. Under the azang the path stretched like a narrow ribbon which was soon lost as the walls of green converged.

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"Is that another village?" we said, pointing at a pale stretch across the river.

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REBEL DESTINY

361 "This is the entrance to the farm of a Gankwe family. And there, can you see? That's a broken village. Many people died there. The others left it. This happened when Bayo was small."

805 "How many hours, Bakra?" Bayo asked. He could tell time by the sun and guessed almost exactly. "They are stopping on the rocks there. It's time to eat."

264 The Bush Negro usually has two meals a day, one in the early forenoon and another at night after dark when work is over. He eats little. These men were on the river with us ten or eleven hours a day, poling upstream, loading and unloading the boats where the rapids were so high that it was impossible to take the heavily loaded boats across them, and what we saw them eat was some cassava bread [262] dipped in river water to soften it, and some cold rice with a little palm oil in it. They had no time to fish, and it was a bad year for fishing, too. Of game there was little.

[224] A few toucans and a monkey were all they could get along the shore—game was scarce even in the deep bush. For more than a score of decades their ancestors had been shooting game along the river, and now the animals kept away.

In the other boats Asikanu was the first served.

"Look, here is your food."

The front paddler put a calabash filled with rice and some cassava bread on the water, and the stream carried it to Asikanu.

"Did you catch it?"

"Ai."

● 484 In Sedefo's boat the cassava cakes were green with mold.
261 One by one these disks of a finger's breadth in thickness and perhaps thirty inches in diameter were laid on the hot rocks to dry. On a trip such as this, enough must be taken to feed a man during his entire absence from home. Well in advance a man's wife, or his mother or sister, or a maternal aunt will be told of such a trip so that she may

ON THE SARAMACCA RIVER

have the necessary time to prepare the cassava. A man cannot count on finding food to buy. Food is often scarce and, especially when crops have not been good—a state of affairs these Bush Negroes know only too well—each household has need of all the food it has grown. 484 061

Asikanu, whose cassava bread was fresh, bathed in the river and changed his dripping loin cloth, spreading out the one he had removed so that it might dry. Bayo washed his second best cloth, for the sun was strong, and it was well to get it fresh and uncreased. So the men busied themselves getting their supplies in order for the journey which was not yet taxing, but would grow more difficult during the next few days, with heavy rapids, great distances between villages, and more exertion needed to strike a village before dark overtook them. 515 484

Even so it was time to be off, Sedefo decided, replacing the cassava cakes—which in a few moments had lost their mold—for the next rapids were something to be reckoned with. Again the four dugouts were on their way, and it was a brave sight to see the four pole-men swinging their long sticks with measured regularity, and the upward leaping three steps, and the down-running steps, and the seated paddlers dipping their carved blades into the water with a slight twist at the end of each stroke to counteract the effect of the push of the man at the bow, to keep the canoe headed straight into the current. 502 484

Ahead, in the leading canoe, the man at the bow waved his hand to us, indicating directions to our men. We could see him put the whole length of his pole in the water three times, then lay it along the gunwale of his dugout and, taking up his paddle, begin to stroke in time with the man at the stern of his boat. [20]

"Mfundu," said Bayo to Bibifo. "Deep."

As we approached the deep water, Bayo with a fillip of his paddle sent our dugout heading into the stream, to be caught up by the current at the center and taken down and across by the impact of the water against the boat. The boats in front had done the same, had cut across to the

REBEL DESTINY

502 other bank, and now as we reached the opposite shore, we
484 saw the small opening of a minor channel which we were to take. With astonishing nicety the tip of the juncture of the main stream and this smaller channel was reached at the same instant. Loin cloths were adjusted, and once more the pole-men took up their pole-sticks and continued the slow passage against the current.

484 The boats were now again traveling close to the bank, so that the details of the forest which fringed the river could be clearly seen. Straight from the water rose the wall of sheer green, all of a dark, almost dull purplish color—a wall of fifty, a hundred, a hundred and fifty feet and more, as the lianas dropped down from the upper branches of the great trees which gave these parasitic growths their support. Here and there we saw a brilliant wing of a bird, and a Bush Negro, ever ready to augment his meager food supply, would unlimber an ancient shotgun, steady himself, and shoot. In Sedefo's canoe, Angita, his pole-man, saw a blue and golden macaw silhouetted as it sat on a slender branch. Out came the shotgun. The macaw, startled but unhit, flew to another branch farther upstream. We crept slowly, noiselessly ahead, and when we were close by Angita shot again, and missed again. The macaw now did not trouble to fly away, and when Angita made aim once more, Sedefo stopped him.

[B25] "No, mati—Let him be, friend. The gods are protecting him. Put away your gun."

Again we cut across, as we regained the wide channel, this time so that the men might speak their errand to the spirit of their great ancestor, the god of the large creek. We did not go too close, however, and all we could see was an azang again, the spiritual guard of palm fronds, and beyond the whitened trunk of a tree and a slender stick with a bit of white cotton attached to its end.

[782] Sedefo spoke conversationally. "Avo—ancestor—we are going up the river. We are working for the American Bak'a. We are on our way to the G'ama's country. Grant

ON THE SARAMACCA RIVER

that we walk the Bak'a with pleasure, that he treat us well, that we walk in safety. Thank you."

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The men in the other canoes, who had gathered about Sedefo's boat, clapped their hands, as Sedefo had done, and said "Thank you," then took up their paddles.

We had noticed that when Sedefo spoke, Bibifo's lips had moved, as though he were either repeating the prayer, or speaking his own, but when the others joined in the voiced "Gran' tangi!" he was silent.

"Did you pray, Bayo?" we asked. Yes, he had. He had prayed for us, too. Did Bibifo also pray for the white man? But before Bibifo could answer, Bayo laughed aloud.

"Bibifo is *kerki sama*—a church man. Call him Adrian, it will please him. I call him Bibifo, nothing else."

"And you, Bayo?"

"I—you will take me with you to Africa. I want to learn African obia, and come back to the Saramacca, and be a big obia man here on the river."

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Old Bibifo accepted his great-grandson's jibes with good humor. We were sorry for the old fellow who was so little at ease with the other men, and was so mercilessly twitted by the youngster in the bow.

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If the old man were to make a suggestion to him about a channel which Bayo had decided against, then he would turn brazenly, and exclaim, "Massa cow!" This is part of the proverb which says that a man who owns the cow has the best right to say where it shall graze. If Bibifo objected when Bayo attempted to do something that seemed impossible, he would face about smilingly and say, "The power which has raised the monkey from the ground and taught it to live safely in the trees is not dead yet."

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"Bibifo," we said, making conversation with the old man, "Why do we go close to the shore?"

"In the center the current is swift and the river deep. When we go in the center, then we use only paddles. It is

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REBEL DESTINY

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48A too deep for the pole-stick. When we go in the center, it is slow. . . . *Koti go!*—Cut across!" he shouted in his shrill voice, as our boat and the others after us veered over to the other side of the stream where the current was less strong.

"How do you know just where these places are?" we asked. "There are so many channels, so many islands. How can you tell?"

"*Ma, kye!* What would you? I belong to this bush. An old man knows his river."

Steadily the boats went ahead in this long, quiet stretch. For fully half an hour the men worked in silence, doggedly going upstream close to the bank, until under the shade of a tree they saw a boat resting.

"Tio, odi! Tio, odi!" Each of our men addressed the two in the boat.

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[69] "Tangi, tio! Tio, odi," they answered each one, until finally they said, "Odi, Bak'a," greeting the stranger last, as was the custom.

Our men explained, "We are going to the Saramacca country, up the river to the Granman. We are carrying the Bakra to the Granman. They belong to America country. They traveled in a fire ship for twenty-one nights and days to come to the Saramacca. Twenty-one nights and days, mati, without resting. *G'an sundyi*—A great state of affairs."

The man said, "We come from the Marowynne. The river is high. The next rapids are difficult. Let us travel together."

And so we were five canoes. Ahead, we could already hear the dull murmur which would soon crescendo to the final roar. This was the water pouring over the first rocks in the distance.

"What rapids are these?"

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[77] "We must not talk about this here. Wait until we pass them. If we speak the name, the spirit will come, and he will be angry. The boat might go over. We might lose part of our load."

Now we came closer to the line of white, which rose higher and higher. Except for the bits of white foam like

ON THE SARAMACCA RIVER

saliva coming downstream, the water below the rapids gave 502
in its calmness little hint of the turbulence beyond. The 484
boats gathered for a discussion.

"This is the best place."

"No, here."

"There, to the side."

The bow men had jumped out and were reconnoitering, shouting at each other from their respective rocks. At last the strangers' ideas prevailed. At the side was best, there, close to the shore, but an overhanging branch or two would have to be struck off. Bayo swam back to our boat to get his machete and, wading up the stream along the bank, slashed at the obstruction. He struck again, and the limb bent, struck once more, and down it fell, coming toward us with lightning rapidity as it was caught by the full force of the current.

"Look out, look out!" Sedefo shouted, as the jagged point made for the boat of the strangers. But the men had already perceived the danger to their canoe, and one of them had jumped into the water and caught at some twigs, diverting the main branch so that it only grazed the side.

Now all was clear, and they were ready to start. The heaviest boat, that of the strangers, would be the first to go. Both the men in it took up poles and, with a firm shove, their boat was in the thick of it.

"Ha'il ha'il!" they cried, and first the prow man would force the boat slowly forward, and then would hold the advantage he had gained while the pole-man in the stern caught his stick in the rocky bottom and pushed with a force that bent the strong wood.

Our men stood by, ready to help.

"The boat is slipping!" Sedefo cried.

And it was true. Into the roaring water jumped Bayo and Angita, and swam out to reach the boat which was losing more and more ground and might at any instant crash downwards. Balancing themselves on the slippery rocks, half wading, half swimming, they grasped its sides and pulled in unison with the pole-man's urging "*Hali!*"

REBEL DESTINY

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kali, ba!—Haul! haul, brother!" Now they had stopped its backward motion. "Hali!" Now the boat gained headway. "Hali!" And this time the prow tilted clear over the top of the rapids and, with another push and another, it was in the still water above.

Three men and not two returned to take our boat, for we were next, being next heaviest, and only one man was needed to keep the boat that had been through the dangerous stretch in its place in the quiet water. In climbed Bayo, and Sedefo took the old man's position. Into the water jumped the other two, this time swimming through the fast water farther away from shore to where some rocks projected from the white foam. For Sedefo had different ideas about the best passage. We were, in fact, to try to make it where the force of the water was greatest, near the center of the stream.

"*Koti go! Okai no mo, okai no mo!*—Cut across! Cut over more, more!" shouted Sedefo as we headed across and down the river toward a partly submerged rock.

"*Massa Nengere, 'kar no mo!*"

"*Kai, kai, mati!*"

With a grunt, he pushed in his pole-stick just as we reached it, holding fast as the boat swung about, and Bayo once more dug among the rocks on the bottom to obtain a fresh grip.

"*Okai, okai!*—Turn, turn!" he shouted above the noise of the water. The cries were frantic, but Sedefo knew the river too well for it to trick him, and as the head of the boat was about to be caught and swirled broadside against another rock, the first of the men from the other boats caught it and righted it about. It was as he had planned.

"Hali!" and, with four pairs of strong arms tugging, we could feel the pull as the boat went forward amid the white-capped water. "Hali!" and the quiet of the river above the falls could be seen just beyond the prow. "Hali!" and we, too, were in still water.

The old man again took his place in our boat, and Sedefo went back to bring his own dugout through. The three

ON THE SARAMACCA RIVER

smaller boats were to be brought up each by its own men. Each selected a place, and the shrill shouted directions could be heard above the falling water. Up, up, they came, the man at the stern holding with his stick, the man at the head up to his shoulders in water, tugging, pulling, hauling the boat over. Once Asikanu's pole slipped, and his boat swung toward a rock, but it caught again and he held it with the fierceness of a man defending himself against an enemy, and then he, too, cut across and found the firmness of the friendly sandy bottom.

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But when the five boats were at last together above the falls, out came machetes to sharpen the ends of the pole-sticks, for an encounter such as they had had the moment before shredded the hard wood into fiber.

Ahead the water was still. The hard work of this day was over. The men straightened their loin cloths and again began to make their way along the banks of the river. The village where we would camp that night was somewhere before us. The sun was nearing the treetops, and the shrieking pairs of parrots were flying over us to the west, seeking their roosting places.

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The short dusk was upon us.

"It is not far," said Bayo, speaking of the village ahead.

"Will we get there before dark?"

"*Massa Gadu sabi*—God alone knows."

"*No fe', Bak'a*—Don't be afraid. We know the river."

The Bush Negro and his river! Seeing the prodigious strength of the men, their great knowledge of current and rocks and channels, one was not afraid. Softly the pole-sticks slid into the sand banks, softly the paddles dipped, and Bayo sang his *seketi*.

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"*N'an g'wa a Lamé*
A s'ib' ko' de muye."

KUNU

was needful, and since then he had often made prayer to his boat, and the boat had carried him safely.

But this is what happened.

On our fourth day up the river we were on our way early, because the men said the falls ahead were difficult, and they wanted to be through them before they stopped to eat. It took us more than an hour to pass the rapids, for the land rose higher and higher, and the water cascaded from one ledge to the next, often in curving channels of swift water that were too deep to allow the use of pole-sticks, and too swift for the paddles to cope with.

There were also those stretches which were without the piled rocks to give the men a footing for pulling the boats over, so that a rope had to be used, and the going was slow and treacherous. Each of the dugouts had this long rope fastened to its prow, and ahead, on the first ledge, were two or more of the men, the other end of the rope in hand, waiting for the signal to start hauling, while holding on to the sides of the boat as they swam were as many men as could be spared, so that if the rope broke, the boat would not be swept downstream, to go crashing against the rocks. These men who faced the fast water of their river, worked as though at the sight of it their Kromanti fighting spirit had entered their bodies, as if not men were there, but an impersonal force pitting itself against the force of the river. Even where the water was not too deep, and they could haul the boat, care could not be slackened for an instant—a wrong turn, and the boat would be capsized, or, what would be as serious, the impact of a rock might cut a gash in its side or bottom, filling it with water faster than they could manage to bring it to a bank. But at last the sound of the falling water was behind us, and the men, once they were in the still water again, went on with the casualness that they fell into with their river when the danger was over, and cast about for a pleasant place to stop and eat.

All at once there was a shout from behind us. Each boat echoed it shrilly. What's that? Whose boat?

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REBEL DESTINY

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It was Sedefo's boat, there in the distance, tilted to one side in what looked to us like still water. The other canoes turned and paddled furiously to reach him, but he had righted his boat before they could come alongside him, and was off down the river to recover what he had lost. The water had claimed the basket back of the tarpaulin-covered load, and a carved paddle which had slipped off when the canoe tilted. The basket belonged to Sedefo. It held his food for the journey up river and the downgoing. The paddle was also his—the finest he had—and had been intended for ceremonial usage when he called as spokesman for us on village heads asking for a night's hospitality, and particularly at the Granman's village, and still later on the way home, when he brought political messages in behalf of his clan to friendly clans along the way he passed. He also lost his best cloth; it was not just a piece of striped cotton a man bought in the white man's store; it had been patiently and dexterously pieced together from many pieces of cloth, plain and striped, in a pattern which was known to the ancestors. His young second wife had made it for him. Her first child was an infant at her breast. When she heard about this, she would think of Sedefo's kunu, and be afraid. Was it so big a kunu that it would punish a child of his wife's family, too?

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This is what the men said while the boats waited for Sedefo to return from his vain search down the rapids. The men had not expected him to recover the things lost. When kunu took, there was nothing that could be done. And it was kunu. The *Bakra-sani*—the white man's things—had remained in the boat unharmed! We looked at the few rocks against which the boat had crashed. They showed plainly above the water, and the current about them made so small a break in the still water that the spirit of this ruffled piece had never disclosed its name, had never before received notice. The three other canoes had gone through without even the grunts from the paddlers which came when the going was hard, for all that was necessary was to go straight for the rocks, let the current swing the boat

KUNU

around, give a strong thrust with the pole-stick, and the canoe was through—a bit of child's play.

We were soon again to see Sedefo's kunu strike. This time it was almost at dusk. The men, it appeared, would not be able to make the village we had planned on for the night. In half an hour it would be dark, and here we were fully two hours' fast traveling from our intended destination. Overhead clouds were coming up from the east. The sky was rapidly becoming overcast. Rain—and everywhere the impenetrable wall of green, rising dark and forbidding. To make camp where we were would have taken at least two hours, and it was growing darker and darker. The men refused to clear the underbrush in the dark.

It seemed, however, that five minutes upstream on the opposite bank and only a little to the south of where we had stopped to talk things over was a village, the name of which when we heard it we recognized as one of the two we had been asked not to visit. There was nothing to do but to brave the displeasure of the Granman and stop there; so turning we headed our boats toward the opposite shore.

In midstream a great wind came up, a wind that in suddenness and force is only met in the tropics. The men shrieked and shouted and struggled until our boats reached shore. But Sedefo's boat, which was the second, seemed to be lifted bodily out of the water. We could see a black mass being heaved up . . . the black tarpaulin was overboard going downstream, and Sedefo after it.

The wind subsided as quickly as it had sprung up, and when Sedefo came back sometime later, he carried the dripping tarpaulin on his head. He did not drink the rum we gave to warm him, but poured it over his hands and his boat as an offering.

The next day we talked with Bayo about kunu.

"Why is it, Bayo, that Sedefo lost his food in the still water? Was it because he felt safe and didn't take care in such small rapids?"

"No," he said promptly, "that's how kunu works. A man travels on the river all his life. He goes over small

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REBEL DESTINY

502 rapids and large rapids. He carries loads and returns to
 48A his own village. But then something happens. His boat is
 1916 good. He walks *kosi*—carefully—but he loses his food, or
 his entire load, or his boat, or even his life. Something is
 working against him. It might be *wisi*—bad magic; it
 105A might be *kunu*. If you have *kunu*, then your enemies can
 make their bad magic work against you. So it is."

"But what is *kunu*, Bayo?"

He hesitated.

12A We assured him that there was no harm in our asking.
 1916 We had been hearing so much about it, first about
 Zimbi, and how he had died from a cut with his machete.
 Now this machete had worked for him since he was a
 boy, and then he cut himself, and then, having cut himself,
 he became sick and died. People said down below this was
kunu. What did it mean?

But he still hesitated and looked about him until at
 last when he spoke, he gave the answer we were coming
 to know so well—"Mansa Gadu sabi—God knows"—that
 answer that was the signal that not alone Mansa Gadu, but
 the one who invoked his name in protection against
 Bakra questions, knew the answer quite well but meant
 to keep his own counsel. For to talk of these matters is not
 good, we had been told before by Sedefo.

It was Bibifo who brought up *kunu* again when Bayo
 stepped out of the boat for an instant.

"Better not talk to Bayo about *kunu*, Bakra. There is a
 very big *kunu* in Bayo's family. He does not mean to lie
 to the Bakra when he doesn't talk, but it is better for him
 not to tell you about it. We Saramacca people say: 'A snake
 bit me. I see a worm, I am afraid.' Do not ask him more."

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538 But the Bush Negro has many sayings, and it was a
 different proverb from that which Bibifo had quoted to us
 that guided us in our tortuous course in search of an
 understanding of *kunu*.

REBEL DESTINY

133 But now a soft haze floated over stream and bush. To the right was the Ingi Sopi channel, dropping so sheer that not even an unloaded dugout could make its way up the rapids, not a single log of wood could be floated down. To the left was the Mamadam, a smoother, more rounded slope. It was up these falls that our boats would later be hauled.

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484 Below us on the rocks our men were unloading the corials and carrying the provisions along the narrow trodden path to the topmost ledge of the falls, where the empty dugouts would be reloaded after they had been taken up through the streaming water.

133 Beyond lay the full stretch of the river. As far as the eye could see, there were none of the channels, none of the many islands which are met with everywhere on this river from its very headwaters to the reaches of the tidal belt near the coast. About us was a stillness which the very roar

[132] of the water heightened. The parrots had long ago passed on in pairs. The butterflies would wait for the sun before they went winging from the east bank to the west. This was a moment of pure interlude. No sun, no breeze, no sound, no glow. This was the moment before the fragmentary dawn would end, before the haze would lift, this the moment when night, having met day, as the Bush Negroes said, was disappearing from sight.

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[482] "It is fine here, ai!" Bayo called to us, as he walked on with a large canister balanced on his head, making his way up the rocks with the sureness and ease of one who is strolling down a lane with the consciousness of a pleasant encounter at the next turning.

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346 As soon as the mist had lifted, we walked up the rocks to the shrine. Facing us and the lower river, a tall, slender pole, weathered to a pale silver, stood higher than the roof of the shrine in front of which it was planted. At its top were the crude outlines of a head and, some three feet from its base, two side pieces were nailed to it and grounded at an angle to steady the image against the onrush of a sudden wind. A short distance from the pole was the shrine

THE SHRINE TO THE RIVER GODS

away. It seemed dangerous even to notice the strip of white cotton which showed high above the falls, though the stick from which it hung we could not see. 778 784

"Human beings do not go there," Bayo had said warningly. "Human eyes must also not go there."

But the shrine at the Mamadam is a friendly place. There a man finds a moment's ease. For a brief interval, at least, the voyager upstream or down rests there to get his breath, as he makes ready for a new start. Directly below the falls is a stretch of still water, which follows upon the wearisome portage at the Musumba Prati and the struggle with the rapids just above it, while, when continuing up river, the boatmen face a succession of rapids before another stretch of quiet water is reached. It is not strange, therefore, that no man, whatever his need to make time, will fail to stop at the Mamadam long enough to make known to the Mother of the River his errand and to ask for the continuance of her protection. 778 784

This shrine is the home of the Great Mother of the inland waters, she who, above all else, had secured to the ancestors of these Bush Negroes their freedom from slavery. In the city and on the plantations of the coastal region the Negroes, under states of possession by the water gods, sing of their longing to join those at the Mamadam. 778 776

Let me die on the river, O!
Let me die on the water, O!
All the Ingi spirits
Are at the Mamadam,
Let me die on the river, O!

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Deep in the interior, if one of the elders, let us say a man of the Dahomey clan, is alarmed at the prospect of the white man penetrating their bush, some man can be looked to, then, to say reassuringly, "Have no fear. They will not come beyond the Mamadam!"

For this river is their own. "Once, long, long ago," the legend was told us, "this river was but a creek. There were no great trees here, no rocks. There were no boats, no 773

REBEL DESTINY

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574 But Bayo's pleasant story came to an abrupt end. Down toward the bank came Sedefo and his companion, motioning the men to join him. They all gathered in front of the guard of palm fronds, and began to discuss something in low voices, while from the village came the staccato rhythms to the Sky God and to the Kromanti spirits in tones at first soft, but swelling and quickening as they continued.

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[162] Sedefo came up to us at last and said, "I will tell you something, but you must not think the people of Pa'aba are unfriendly. I will tell you this. Let us go on and make camp farther up the river. There is a provision ground not too far away. We will make it in time."

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574 In the boat Bayo told us that many were possessed in the village, and since here at Pa'aba they danced Kromanti strong, the men did not think it safe to bring us to the village. The year before Kasanya had spent a trying night here. Two or three of the men had found guns and had gone tearing about the village, so that not alone had the women shut themselves up in their huts, as they often did at Kromanti dances, but the men, too, had had to go in hiding.

"That is why we are going on. But I have a strong Kromanti spirit myself. I will go back to Pa'aba tonight and watch the men dance," he said with a laugh.

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[497] It was already quite dark when we made the planting ground. Up a narrow footpath we followed Kasanya.

"Koni, koni—Take care, don't trip at night," he kept calling to us. "Mbwoyu—Hurry," he urged, though we needed no urging to keep close behind him in this narrow dark shaft which cut the greater darkness of the bush in two.

Bibifo would sleep in our boat to watch the provisions, Kasanya explained as he led the way, for the clearing was so far from shore that it was not wise to leave the boats unwatched.

"It is far," he said. "Grounds are cleared that way—not too near a village, not too near the shore."

THE ARTIST OF MA'LOBBI

us when we asked him. At one landing place where we stopped for a moment, we could hear the drums sounding the rhythm to the river gods, but the drumming stopped abruptly as word went back along the path that white people had come. Men streaked with pemba came down to the river to look at the Bakra who had visited the village of their Granman. 103
609

In the boat, we missed Bayo. The grandson of the Granman, who was our bow paddler, we had met but casually before we had started. There had been none of the chances for conversation that had made of Bayo a friend before he and his great-grandfather came to take us to the country of the Granman. Later we would come to know this youth for a pleasant young man, capable and quiet, who was proud to show his ability, and quick to resent the suggestions of our town man in such matters as making a shelter for the night. 644
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"We are children of the bush!" the young man exclaimed sharply. "We know how to make this." And such a good shelter did the paddlers build that men of a near-by village, who passed, stopped and asked that it not be torn down the next morning, as had to be done with shelters erected for the night on the land of a strange clan, but that we should let it stand so that others might use it. [185]

When we asked him questions, however, or made observations on people who passed by in their canoes, he gave us noncommittal replies. Mataibo, the captain of our boat, was even more reserved, though he liked to twit our town man, and in an unofficial capacity would have been amusing. Conversation between the two paddlers, or between them and the two young men who were entrusted with our other boat, was in the clipped, rapid "deep-Saramacca" speech which, in spite of our use of it in conversation at the Granman's village, we still found it difficult to follow when Bush Negroes spoke informally to one another. [157] [197]

As the day wore on, we began to get used to the rapidity with which village after village was passed. Here was the landing place of the one where we had stopped so that 484 •

REBEL DESTINY

- 48A Sedefo might greet his sister. It was almost a half-day's travel, going up river, from Asindopo Lantiwe, yet it was not quite noon, and we were passing it. Here was Hei Kununu, its steep slopes already swinging into sight as we rounded a bend of the river and came through the small rapids above the settlement, and still it seemed as though we had but begun our course down toward our base camp and the railhead. And it was still early in the afternoon when we came to Ma'lobbi.

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- 462 At the landing place, women were about. Much of the work of the Bush Negro woman is at the river's edge, and for strangers like ourselves, passing in a dugout, the presence of women working on the bank was the only sign that here was a landing place, and that farther inland lay a village. To the river they came with their carved clothes beaters, like the one we could see in the hand of the woman who greeted us here at Ma'lobbi, fashioned, as we later learned when she sold it to us, in the shape of a male yodu head on one end, and a female snake on the other. It was at the edge of the water that a woman scraped cooking pots and calabash dishes with sand, and it was here, if it seemed a good day for fishing, that a woman would go wading in the water to rest a cooking pot on the river bottom, and stand silently until an inquisitive school of small fish swam into it when, with a quick jerk, she would bring it up to take out what fish there were. This, aside from the use of small hooks, was the only kind of fishing a woman could do, for the fishing traps were for the use of men. But the cooking pot brought in many small fish to add flavor to a dish of rice.

- 123 As we walked into the village, accompanied by one of our
609 younger paddlers, the bassia greeted us. The head of the village was waiting for us, he told us. Paddlers of small boats on their way downstream had spread the word that our visit with the Granman was drawing to an end.

Chapter XVI

BAYO, THE PLAYBOY

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IT HAD been a day of hard travel down the Mamadam, through the Musumba Prati, and down the long wearying stretch of quiet water until we reached the Tita Buka Falls. The memory of the up-river passage of these troubled stretches had not yet worn down sufficiently to allow of contemplating the downgoing without a measure of strain, but our anxiety turned to astonishment when the paddlers, skirting above the thunder of the water, steered the boats into a barely visible channel down which we floated by easy stages. 507
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"Mati-o," said chief Mataibo to the young men, when we had made the singularly fine passage, "the gods are taking them with pleasure. We must do the same!"

Passing the Gran' Creek he prayed from midstream, calling on the spirit of the creek, whom he addressed as ancestor, to give us long life in our white man's country. 782

Now we were here at Djamungo, at Bayo's village where, if he were only there, we should be seeing a fine dance, and where, what at the moment was far more important for us, many sacred objects awaited us. Djamungo was a village about whose magic other villages on the river were uneasy. 789
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"Bayo is at Gankwe waiting for you. He is helping the men haul lumber, but when he hears you are back, he will come," said a woman who came up saying she was his 609

BAYO, THE PLAYBOY

him about it as he came to take the white man through the bush trails to a neighboring village. 302
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One of the girls who admired him had achieved this, but how she had managed to make the minute braids was difficult for us to see, for Bayo's hair the day before, long for him, had not seemed sufficiently yielding to permit of braiding. Yet here he was, his head covered with innumerable small braids which divided the white scalp into sections and showed lines where the many regular parts had been made. This made quite a new man out of Bayo. He was no longer the warrior who went without food because he was bored with the idea of preparing the food—a woman's task or, at best, that of an old man like his great-grandfather Bibifo who had cooked on the up-river trip. Now he was a dandy. [52]
[887]

"Ai-yo!" he crowed back as we speculated on the labor that had gone into the creation. "It took her almost all the night! It is hard work."

"She must like you, Bayo."

"She likes me well, ai!"

"Are you going to have her for your third wife?"

"Who knows? But a man doesn't marry every woman who braids his hair."

Soon Bayo and the white man were off through the bush, Tross going ahead as scout. Back and across the path he would dart and for the white man, unaccustomed to the sounds of the bush, it was difficult to tell whether the rustling he heard was caused by the dog, or by the small animals stirred up from time to time. Once a snake coiled on the path moved lazily away as they approached; Tross had disturbed it, and the snake had no mind for more encounters. Once a small animal of some sort dashed across the trail ahead, the dog in close pursuit, and for some moments we could hear them tearing through the underbrush. 484
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"Aren't you afraid that some animal will hurt Tross, Bayo?"

"He is a good dog. And I have put strong obia on him." [789]

"OBIA COMESI"

The river had fallen. Whole stretches appeared as dry as the sandy village clearings. The green-heart trees were in full bloom, looking like giant flowering mimosas with heads lifted high above the green wall of matted bush. As we sped past the village landing of Ginkwe, women washing their clothes and children at play called out a last "*Adiosio-o-o-o*," but in a moment we rounded a bend of the river and were out of sight.

Our only stop was at New Village, not far from the railroad, where the chief had promised to have an apinti for us. He was expecting us, and with him was his friend, the chief of Kadyu, whose village lay below the railhead.

"I had trouble finding a skin for the head," he said, "but one of my men shot a deer, and so I have a fine one for you. . . . And here is an obia to keep you alive on the water." He transferred the power of the obia to us, and then, as we rose to leave, he added, "When you get to your home, tell the headman of your village 'Howdo' in the name of the Chief of New Village, and his friend, the Chief of Kadyu."

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As we floated up to the landing place where men were waiting to take our boxes to the train, we saw an hibiscus tree in bloom before the little shop kept by a British Guiana mulatto who did some trading with the Bush Negroes.

"What do you call this tree, Bayo?"

"Which one, this with the red flowers? I don't know. That's a Bak'a sani—a white man's thing."

Bakra sani!

The hibiscus tree, the mulatto who for the Bush Negro is also a Bakra, ourselves and our phonograph and flash-lights—all were white men's things, intruders in his bush, strangers. Only by the grace of his powerful ancestors, and of the gods of his ancestors, might such things be allowed life and a measure of joy there, as witness the bright blossoms, the livelihood the mulatto earned, and our own good health.

Upriver

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Hot sun . . . Gush of rapid water . . . Bees and dragon-#34 flies cruise about. . . Rain . . . Hot sun . . . There is a crash of branches in the bush; some animal, probably a tapir. . . Kingfishers chase each other over the yellow bosom of the river. . . Talkee-talkie chatter. . . The white man curses the flies. . . That tiny speck a mile high is a vulture, wheeling without effort in great circles. . . Rapids . . . Cloud-banks in the sky. High-lights on the river . . . Hot sun . . . Poling up the rapids . . . Grunting Negroes lean on the slick wet poles. . . Still water . . . The paddlers step overboard to drag the boat up a difficult piece of rapid water. . . The canoe is stuck on a rock. . . It swings broadside to the current. . . The river almost wins; we get away by a hair's breadth. . . Over into the still water . . .

Moi-Man sings a Djuka song. . . Alligators sunning on sandbanks . . . Gorgeous Morpho butterflies go by on shimmering blue wings. . . Jewellery is made from them. . . Showers of little white butterflies cross the stream, fluttering tirelessly. . . A feast for the swallows . . . Spray from the fast waves . . . Wet tarpaulin over the baggage . . .

The forest is as impassable now as it was in the days of the rebellion. There is no way of penetrating the interior except by travelling up one of the great rivers of Surinam. The Bush Negroes spend much of their time on the rivers; their watercraft is exquisite. To make the laborious passage upstream the expedition is entirely dependent upon these black polers. They consent to accompany the white men—*bahkras* as they are called—with no great eagerness. The Djukas realize that

- 484 they must tolerate a certain amount of intrusion, and negotiations for canoes and paddlers can be made for occasional journeys upstream.

648 The Bush Negroes sometimes come down to Paramaribo, but on the whole they have no desire for contact with white civilization. At one or two points along the lower rivers trading-posts have been set up by the Surinam Balata Company. The post near Kabel, on the Surinam River, is connected with Paramaribo by a small railroad, the only one in the colony. Once a week a tiny locomotive hauls some wooden coaches up to Kabel, a journey of nine hours. For a few miles the train passes through cleared plantation lands before plunging into the bush, the engine making as much as twenty miles an hour when it is going well. A few Hindu and Indian villages are scattered along the route. When the train stops at Republik, swarms of Hindu fruit dealers attack the passengers: Carib Indians, coloured like ripe mangoes, can be seen holding themselves proudly aloof from such merchants. A little further on the *pork-knockers* detrain. They are free-lance blacks, seeking a fortune by washing for gold in the yellow waters which roll down from the foothills of the distant mountains.

- 484 Here, at Kabel, one river trip begins. The trading factor,
- 648 Mr. Alexander Wolff, had negotiated with the Bush Negroes for two forty-foot dugouts, capable of carrying a thousand pounds of luggage and equipment, and had secured four Bush Negro paddlers. One is named Quacoe, the famous name of the Tempati rebel, and another is called Flagawai,

Upriver

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or Waving Flag. There is also a town cook, known as Bundle. 484 ●

It is grey on the misty river when we leave Kabel to take 648
up the journey into the interior. The corials are wet with fog.

A group of villagers stands on the bank to watch our departure. The last evidence of civilization is the corrugated iron shack which marks the terminus of the railroad. The baggage has been transferred to the canoes, and the paddlers take their places. We shove off on the tawny river. The villagers shout a farewell: "*Wakka bon na watra, bahkra.*"—"Walk well on the water, white man."

Seeing these black-skinned paddlers dimly through the morning mist, one can easily imagine being on the Niger, headed into the interior of Africa. They are characteristic West African types, with broad noses, thick lips, and kinky [142] hair. There are no evidences of racial mixture, no hybrids, no mulattoes. Noticeably aristocratic in bearing, they are carefully groomed and carry themselves admirably. In parleying with the white man they show no deference, for they have no sense of inferiority. They remember the rebellion.

The corials are paddled over a short stretch of quiet water before the rapids begin. It is not long, however, before the boatmen lay down their paddles and take up the great poles. The rhythmic heaving begins. After a few miles they draw the canoes in to the bank, for no apparent reason. Their wives appear out of the bush, bringing the men some extra supplies for the journey. There is an additional loin-cloth for each [297] paddler, and two togas, worn over the shoulder. The native substitute for a valise, in which these clothes are packed to [445]

Djuka

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[415] keep them dry, is a carved calabash gourd, with a tight-fitting waterproof cover made from another gourd. These are stored away amidship, along with high piles of cassava cakes and jugs of mareepa oil, the native soft drink. [272] The women also add to the cargo a small gipsy cooking-pot and an unclean shotgun.

There is much talkee-talkee during the loading. After the lapse of some time a second start is made, and the poling begins again. After hours on the river, around bend after bend, and through innumerable passages of rapid and rough water, we encounter a Bush Negro corial coming downstream. In it are two paddlers, and a woman with a little boy. Immediately the Djukas bring the boats together for a gossip and palaver. The strangers pay little attention to the bahkra, except a curt nod in answer to his greeting. But they ask the paddlers all about the white man, who he is, where he is going, and where he comes from. Flagawai replies in detail, and for his part asks news of the upper river. The strangers have come from a distant, picturesquely named village many days up the Surinam River, Futu No Habbe Ackaba, "The Foot That Has No Resting-Place." This signifies the long journey required to reach it, but the phrase might be taken as symbolical of the many enforced journeyings of the Negro race.

The powwow continues for some time. Our restless hints pass unnoticed. Unlike other natives, who can be commanded and beaten, the Djukas are independent; to give them orders is out of the question. The traveller who at-

Upriver

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tempted it would find himself deserted by his paddlers, lug- 484
 gage deposited in the bush, scrupulously intact, while his 648
 paddlers went along the river warning the villages against the
 malicious bahkra. And there he would remain, set down in
 the bush, unable to get more paddlers, until hunger made him
 humble. In the interior there is no means of transportation,
 no communication, except by Djukas. So on the whole the
 white man is largely subject to the will of his guides, over
 whom he has only nominal control; it behooves him to put
 up with their whims, and to avoid the mistake of trying to
 command them.

Gradually the canoes float apart, but the talking continues. 198
 A thought pops into a black head and is shouted across the 484
 intervening water. Questions, answers, continue though the 648
 boats are now some distance away from each other. To make
 their words carry far over the water, the Djukas actually
 lower their voices, singing out the words in a sustained, re-
 sonant tone that makes a mellow sound across the waves.
 This long drawn-out "Ah-e-e-e" can be heard after the other
 corial has passed far down the river. Out of sight around a
 bend, we can still hear the other Bush Negroes intoning
 strange words.

Not being able to follow the conversation, we ask the cook, 198
 Bundle, what it's about. Bundle does not know. The Djukas 191
 are not using talkee-talkee now. They are using an obscure 484
 tongue. When the Bush Negroes converse with outsiders 648
 they employ the talkee-talkee language which white men
 and Paramaribo Town Negroes can understand. But they also

484 34

Djuka

648 have a tribal language called *odo, deepee-talkee*, or *Saramacca-tongo* known only among themselves; they are members of
 [191] the Saramaccaner tribe.
 [198]

Before the other corial is out of earshot, the Djukas bid us good-bye with the familiar words: "*Wakka bon na watra, bahkral*" "*Gran danke, matio*"—"Many thanks, my uncle," we respond, adding the *o* sound to the last word to make it carry over the waves, as they do. To them "uncle" is the most respectful appellation that can be used, similar to our respectful use of the word "father." For them a maternal uncle is more important than a father.

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For a while now the poling continues in silence. Further on we pass a lone Djuka on the bank, skilfully setting a fish trap constructed of sticks and *lianas*. Far away upstream can be heard the muffled report of a shotgun; some black hunter is bringing in game. The angry currents slap constantly against the side of the corial. We round another bend and see ahead only more rapids, where rocks make innumerable white ripples in the muddy water.

A stop is made for lunch at one of the many islands. Bundle brings out canned food and the gipsy pot. The river looks enticing and cool. The *bahkra* begins taking off his clothes for a swim in the water near shore. The Negroes are abashed at his nakedness, and Bundle tactfully advises him to be more modest.

136 The waters in this part of the great South American rain forest are infested with the Brazilian piranha or piraya (*Serrasalmo sp.*), a species of carnivorous fish. They are small,

Upriver

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something like bass, but with undershot thick jaws and¹³⁶ heavy teeth. They run six to eight inches long and seldom weigh more than half a pound. But they travel in schools and attack simultaneously, so that any flesh in the water, human or otherwise, with a bloody surface exposed, is torn to pieces in a short time. If a bush-hog is killed and suspended in the water, the smell of blood attracts these fish; in an incredibly short space of time the carcass is wholly devoured.

The Djukas have learned to be wary of this fish. On one¹³⁶ occasion, when trading for a drum at an Aucaner village,⁴⁸⁴ the blacks handed the drum out to the corial on a long pole,⁶⁴⁸ rather than step a few feet into the water. Despite this fear, in poling upstream it is frequently necessary for the paddlers to get out of the canoe in water up to their armpits and forcibly drag it over the rocks. On such occasions their courage is immediate and unfailing. They enter the water, knowing that piraya may be present. There is no other way of getting the boats over rock-studded pieces of fast water, where paddles are useless and poles insufficient. They jump out into the river, taking the chance of having pieces of flesh excised from their limbs.

Fear of this fish prevents constant bathing in all parts of¹³⁶ the river. Now, however, after a long hot trip, the lure of a⁴⁸⁴ cool bath in the fresh flowing water overcomes the bahkra's⁶⁴⁸ caution, but the Djukas, as soon as they have grasped the white man's intention, will not permit him to enter the water. They gesticulate violently, waving him back with rapid and excited words—no, no, he cannot go in—piraya, piraya! He is

136 almost forcibly prevented. But when the day's journey is over,
 ● 484 and we have camped for the night in an upriver village, the
 648 paddlers will take the risk of bathing in the cool stream.
 Even though there are no piraya in the immediate vicinity,
 the bathers will not linger long.



484 All the long, heavy afternoon the Negroes toil slowly with
 648 the great poles. Troe stops to cut some herbs for medicine.
 Flagawai sharpens the end of his pole with a bush-knife to
 give it a better grip on the river-bed. We have never seen
 better paddling, not even in the Canadian woods, where the
 Indian guides retain the canoe-craft of the American abo-
 rigines, nor on the Mazaruni River in British Guiana, where
 the black diamond-seekers haul their great whaling boats over
 the rapids.

There is a low falls across the river. The corials have to be
 dragged up over the slanting slippery rocks into the higher
 water beyond. Everyone gets out. The boatmen quietly decide
 the best path; there is little hesitation and no debate. Brown
 hands catch hold of the gunwales and brown feet begin to
 strain willingly on the slick wet rocks. The lumbering boat
 slowly mounts the incline. Here again the white man's life
 is in the hands of the Negroes; if the corial were to upset,
 the food would be lost, and the trip would end disastrously.

Upriver

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The blacks are proud of their water skill. Upsetting a canoe or drowning a passenger are disgraces that no man can ever live down. But they are rare occurrences. The Indians of this part of the continent, not nearly so skilful, use a different style of canoe and paddle. Djuka paddles are hewn with a bush-knife from a solid plank of hard wood, and finished off with an ordinary pocket-knife. The handle is frequently pierced with delicate ornamental work, the entire piece beautifully balanced to handle easily. The men's paddles are as tall as they are, but the women's are shorter and more elaborate. Tiny ones are given children as soon as they are big enough to hold them, so that the Djuka's water skill is the result of a lifetime on the river.

All the boats are dugouts; no canvas or bark canoe would last long in these rapids. They are manufactured out of big trees, which are felled and allowed to season. Then the centres are hollowed out with fire and adze; nothing is left but the shell of the trunk, with perpendicular sides and a rounded bottom. This is filled with water, into which hot rocks are dropped. The heated water softens the wood, enabling thwarts to be thrust in, forcing the gunwales apart. The ends are then symmetrically curved up and are often carved. Seats, as well as bow and stern pieces, are often carefully decorated. The entire boat has a distinct West African style. When completed it is from eight to forty feet long. Ours has a large sunshade of thatched grass near the stern, because the white man is too soft to endure the sun's rays. Under the shade we have a camp-chair; a little comfort for the long trip. The

314 shot enters the rubber but does not pierce it through. Little dents indicate where the shot is buried inside. With a pistol, however, the result is different. A bullet from a .38 calibre revolver goes clean through. After we have fired, a Negro detaches himself from the group and disappears in the bush. In twenty minutes he is back, bringing the bullet from the revolver. He had traced its course by broken twigs and [151] clipped branches, and finally dug it out of the side of a tree with his bush-knife—on the whole an extraordinary bit of woodcraft.

● 484 It is disgusting to find that we have to sleep overnight in this camp. The white man is thoroughly exhausted, able only to drop down on a log while the Negroes make camp. The bahkra's hammock is slung and a fire started. Monkey meat is the *pièce de résistance* of the evening meal.

[252] The monkey is not skinned; only the hair is scraped off.

262] Monkey skin is a jungle delicacy, but there is a humanly cadaverous look to the depilated body. Half of the meat is cut up and dumped into the stew pot together with rice and salt.

[251] The other half is smoked liberally to preserve it for the morrow.

Not in the mood to take food which his stomach might reject, the bahkra dines on a can of salmon, with rice and tea on the side. The sun has hardly set when he falls gratefully into the hammock and ties the mosquito netting in place, ready for profound slumber.

521 He soon finds that sleep is out of the question. The Bush Negroes are sitting about the campfire swapping tales of

/14 cont. /

584 and, once this has been promised, she does indeed continue to be regarded specifically as the betrothed of the person who made the request. As soon as she is marriageable, she is handed over to her man with or without her consent, and it may be regarded as a rare case when such a promise is broken.

[431] The man to whom she is promised sometimes does not see his future wife before the occasion of her betrothal, but usually he is concerned with her upbringing and from time to time gives her presents consisting of money, pantjes, and corals.

[591] Some take the girl promised to them even when she is only three or four years old in order to rear her further.

[672] The promising of newborn girls takes place for the most part when there are obligations between parents, as was reported in [682] Chapter III, and in the case of enslavement which is done to one [567] family by another in case of poisoning, and so forth.

586 It is an everyday occurrence that a woman leaves her husband or a man his wife for another.

595 Polygyny is much practiced, and among my workers I know several who have three or four wives, most of whom are very young. Some, however, have only one wife.

It is noteworthy that all the wives sleep with the man in one hut, while in addition he perhaps keeps with him a girl whom he [513] is bringing up to be his wife. One wife will be /15/ with him in the hammock and lies with her feet at the head end of the man and the latter in turn with his feet at the head end of the women, while the other women sleep in their hammocks.

• [484] If a Bush Negro goes out, be it to celebrate a festival or in order to float wood to the town, he takes all his wives with him; only in case of illness do they remain behind.

His wives get money separately, and therefore they must also separately provide for his food, so that one cooks the food in the morning, another at midday, a third in the evening, etc. [578] This way of life and their jealous nature frequently bring about household quarrels that rarely end in any way other than bloody fights.

585 Upon the conclusion of a marriage the man is obligated to 583 give the parents of the girl as a marriage portion a long, broad,

/24 cont. /

Chapter XVI

Manner of Traveling, and so forth

484

Their manner of traveling is very simple. Usually wife and children accompany them; very rarely do they go alone. They never take along more food provisions than they consider to be strictly necessary, in order not to have any burden of great baggage, for which their small, narrow vessels made out of a tree trunk are in any case little suited.

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As primitive people they are able to withstand deprivations very well, but nonetheless they always take care to be armed when they go traveling. These hunting and war weapons consist of guns, powder, lead, bow and arrows, as well as a machete and an ax.

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[501]

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Frequently they can continue on these journeys in a small, narrow corjaal (canoe) for weeks on end; there is, of course, a great lack of comforts, but they are contented so long as they merely have a little place in the corjaal where they can maintain a flaming fire, which serves for the preparation of foods and because the Negro generally finds in it a, for him, pleasant sociability. Their journeys are not of great significance; they never extend across the sea, which is the case among the various Indian tribes.

/25/

Chapter XVII

Manner of Waging War, Ceremonies in connection with Concluding Peace and Alliance

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War is rarely waged by or among them, but when it does take place, their conflict bears the character of a thirst for revenge, treachery, and hatred.

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At the conclusion of peace, the subject party pledges itself to satisfy the demands of the victors, provided these are mutually judged as fair. As part of the ceremonies observed on this occasion there is also a large consumption of dram.

220/141 cont. /

24/ of this predatory cultivation has been reached. The nearby
 23/ agricultural lands are kept in use with too brief a rest period, with
 [134] the result that the soil is overworked and the periodic recovery
 [125] of the forest proceeds at an ever slower pace. In addition one
 struggles to an increasing degree with the problem /142/ of the
 leaf-cutting ants, which keep the easily accessible places occupied.

24/ The consequence of this circumstance is that the Bush Negroes
 31/ are forced to make the grounds farther and farther from their vil-
 [484] lages. One travels for hours up or down the river in order to
 [422] reach good land. When one cannot make good use of a forest
 creek in order to transport the produce from the field, one is
 forced to carry the harvest for one or two hours through the forest
 to the river. The Bush Negro does not go farther than a two
 hours' walk (about six kilometers from the river) (see the map /see
 p. 13 /).

24/ On the Tapanahoni one spends even days in traveling to less
 31/ populated areas in order to plant and to harvest. One then estab-
 36/ lishes so-called work camps along the river, from which one
 [103] operates in the surrounding areas. This is the case, among others,
 between Godobolo and Granbori for people from Driestabberje or
 31/ other centers. That one does not go even farther up river, all the
 423 way past the last village, Granbori, has to do with a prohibition
 643 by the granman of the Aucaners. That is, the latter wants to re-
 serve the lands lying beyond this point as hunting lands and there-
 fore will not make them available for agricultural purposes.

24/ The inhabitants of the villages along the lower Tapanahoni,
 31/ such as Sajé, Clementi, and Malobbi, frequently lay out their food
 423 grounds in the Laws, where they can have at their disposal agri-
 36/ cultural lands as far as the Aboenasoengoe Falls. Farther upstream
 103 on this river the Bonni or Aloekoe Negroes assert their rights.

5. Differences between Aucaners and Paramaccaners

101 The conditions given above apply in the main to the Aucaner
 162 Bush Negroes of the Tapanahoni. They number today approximately
 [311] 6,500 persons. The Paramaccaner Bush Negroes of the Marowijne,
 approximately 1,700 in number, are in somewhat more favorable

The beliefs of both, attributing illnesses to
 /516 cont.

supernatural causes, did not predispose them to turn to European doctors. Moreover, the Saint-Laurent hospital was so far away [753] (six days paddling downstream) that a seriously ill person had plenty of time to die en route. The Boni went there only as a last resource and in general at the point of death. As for the Oayana, not a single one presented himself there before 1950.

In 1936-1939 several circuits had been made from the post of La Forestière located at the mouth of the river, but no consistent [743] medical action had been feasible. Not until 1949 was it possible to create a medical center in the country itself, at Maripasoula.

The populations were visited regularly, and the seriously ill could [164] be hospitalized on the spot. At the same time systematic spraying with DDT inside all the huts, destroying the anthropophile anopheles, changed the environmental conditions considerably; if malaria has not disappeared, it has ceased, both among the Indians and among the Boni children, to be the principal cause of morbidity.

The action of the medical center has been exercised more on the Boni, who live a few hours by canoe from Maripasoula, than on the Oayana. Among the latter, the principal villages are two days [484] journey by motorboat upstream amidst difficult waterfalls; the [753] Indians are often on the move, fishing on the upper courses of the rivers or visiting their relatives on Brazilian rivers; it has happened several times that the circuits of the doctors and medical attendants (one per trimester on the average) do not find anybody in the villages; incidentally, the Oayana tend to attribute all internal ailments to magical causes, consulting willingly only [844] for wounds. They willingly accept the remedies given on the spot, but rarely take the initiative of moving a sick person to Maripasoula; the women continue to have their babies delivered in the villages, without any hygiene.

Only during the last three or four years has a change in attitude been noticeable among them vis-à-vis medicine; as we shall show below, no notable modification in their mortality has yet been observed as a result of this fact.

The principal interest of this study being to compare the demographic data of two populations before they had been modified

/S19 cont. /

125 --158 (80%) answered with good grace;

--33 (17%) answered with reticence or gave contradictory

[573] answers in 1956 and 1957. Checking showed that they neglected to mention a living child, generally one of their older ones whom they were not raising themselves. In spite of the precautions taken, there are some omissions in the census of the adolescents and young people because of this (7).

7. On the other hand, we never ascertained any dissimulation concerning dead children. On the contrary, the Boni women speak of their deceased children with a certain indifference.

For 28 of these women we were able to reconstruct their lives with sufficient precision by interrogating contradictorily the husbands and the older brothers of the same mother. The five others were eliminated;

7 (3%) obstinately refused to answer without giving any justification for their attitude.

● [484] Eighteen women could not be added, this being due to the continual moving of the Boni between their villages, their crop plantings, and their fishing places.

We took into account 7 women who died before 1957, whom we had been able to question in the preceding years.

[163] All in all, we have preserved 193 records of women having had 747 children, of whom 472 had survived as of the first of January 1958.

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Flooding is very variable according to the configuration of the rivers and the nature of the terrain.

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At the Creole village of Grigel, situated at the bottom of a glove-finger loop of the Waki River, the June flooding reaches a level of eight meters above the average level in the dry season; the Creole and Indian villages of the Waki are established on hills. On the contrary, along the Lawa whose course is rectilinear, the variation in level is seldom greater than four meters. The maximum water level is 50 centimeters to one meter /above/

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the soil of the alluvial terrace. Several of the Creole and Boni villages of the Lawa are even established at the very edge of the great river; the houses are built on piles and their occupants go home by boat during several weeks of the year. Nevertheless, most of the villages and farming habitations are outside the reach of flooding on terraces situated about five meters above the high-water mark, which are found from place to place at the edge of the river and which perhaps mark vestiges of an ancient terrace. This is notably the case with Boniville and Loka villages.

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The whole of the territory is entirely covered by equatorial forest: a forest continuous and dense which extends over hundreds of kilometers without a village, without a clearing, without a trail.

The Guiana forest is less high than is ordinarily thought. It is an infinite succession of trees of all dimensions and of extremely varied species, among which true giants are rare; the average height of the cover is around 30 meters, and large trunks are rare.

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The variety of species is very great; and the useful ones, few in number and dispersed, are difficult to exploit. The Refugee Blacks, who have a deep knowledge of the forest and its resources, utilize scarcely ten species out of the some 200 which they differentiate, judging the others unusable either because their

/6 cont. /

824 wood is too hard to be worked with ordinary instruments or, on the
contrary, because it is too soft, too easily attacked by insects, or
311 has a tendency to rot. The zone exploitable by native procedures
is limited (for the floodable zones /7/ do not allow fine woods)
to the slope of the hills bordering the valley of the watercourses
accessible to pirogues; beyond, the cartage of felled trunks be-
comes impracticable.

137 A very dense epiphytic vegetation connects the trees with
132 their upper parts; it is there that life blossoms out: flowers, birds,
insects, and monkeys.

421 Progress through the forest is very arduous. The undergrowth,
132 shrubs, bushes, bound together by fine and elastic lianas, offers
132 a constant obstacle, the machete /habe/ must be wielded at each
412 step. The nature of the terrain, a succession of bogs and hills
133 with steep and slippery slopes, makes walking for heavily loaded
men exhausting. On the trail one succeeds with difficulty in
making more than 15 to 20 kilometers a day; in the uninhabited
forest one can scarcely advance five to six kilometers a day by
cutting the strict minimum as one does when hunting. The open-
ing of a route permitting the passage of heavily laden men cannot
progress more than three kilometers a day on the average.

137 The great forest offers few real dangers, but it is an environ-
182 ment profoundly hostile to man, which does not present spontane-
ously any food resource and allows establishment of villages and
cultivated areas only at the price of great efforts.

136 One meets few animals in the interior of the forest, and the
resources for hunting are very limited; on the other hand, there
are few harmful animals; wild beasts are few and practically do
not appear; snakes are much rarer than on the coast and represent
164 only a slight danger. The most real dangers of the forest come
from the fall of branches and epiphytes, principally when it is
cleared for cultivation; each year there are accidents of this kind
in Boni country. Besides, work in the forest is the occasion for
many wounds which tend to ulcerate.

/28 cont. /

613 although the supposed common ancestress doubtless goes back to
614 the beginning of the 18th century and for three generations they
984 have been divided among four villages situated at a week's dis-
[62] tance by boat from one another. We can, with very few chances
of error, affirm that they certainly have a common matrilineal
origin and that they in fact constitute one lineage.

182 On this subject let us note that geographical separation can-
619 not play the same role among the Refugee Blacks as in the African
B61 tribes of cultivators. The Refugee Blacks, whose habitat is linear
[204] along the banks of the river and who, being boatmen, are con-
tinually moving, cannot be completely isolated from one another.

613 /29/ Under these conditions, how can we explain the
614 existence within certain lineages of individualized fractions subject
571 to a separate kunu, such as Papaiston 2?

One can assume that these fractions do not really have the
same origin as the principal group and that they result from a
process of assimilation of a paternally related fragment.

We have cited the example of Aneta's descendants (Aw.B.3).
They are already integrated into the social life of the group;
in two or three generations nobody will remember any longer their
[784] exact origin. But they will remain differentiated from the princi-
pal fraction of the Awara Bakka because they will still be subject
to the kunu of their ancestress.

121 Such are the elements we have been able to draw from a
general study of kin groups among the Boni. We shall look for
other data in the study of the implantation of these groups on the
soil, and especially of the apportionment of lands among them;
finally, we shall study family custom and especially inheritance.

A complete understanding of the kinship system and its
functioning can be obtained only in the future by following the
evolution of kin groups, the formation of new villages; and the
designation of new headmen.

/39 cont. /

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posts except as they present themselves for recording of vital statistics or for registration on voting lists.

administration has for a long time appeared /40/ in the eyes of the inhabitants of the interior as a benevolent office); but they obey the old African maxim of never telling the whites more than half of what they know.

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In the absence of any nominal census which could serve as a point of departure, this job presented considerable difficulties arising principally from the extreme mobility of the population:

- [484] —Never is the whole population of a village assembled together simultaneously; the proportion of those absent frequently reaches 50 per cent, especially in the fine season (hunting, fishing, boating, clearings at the farming habitations, etc.);

[551] —A good many men and women have two, sometimes three, names used interchangeably. If one does not personally know a large part of the inhabitants of the villages and does not have at his disposal carefully made-up genealogical tables, it is impossible to understand anything;

[115] —If the men respond in good faith, it is not the same with the women, who are inaccessible to any reasoning. Some try to cash in on the information they give, others obstinately refuse to answer;

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—A number of adolescents and even of men between 20 and 35 years old have no regular hut. Each Boni, man or woman, is in principle expected to build a hut in one of the "great villages." But this residence may be fictitious: It can, for example, be a tumbled-down hut which they intend to put up again some day... or the pent roof of the house of the mother or a brother, under which they install themselves on days when a ceremony causes the lineage to meet together, residing the rest of the year in a farming habitation.

/209 cont. /

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784 If someone has a Kumēnti, certain objects used in the cult: pestle, mortar, machete, must not be raised near him. His gita "would rise" immediately. Likewise while he is eating, neither tiger nor gun must be mentioned. To prevent their gita from rising, those concerned may take the precaution of putting a small piece of wood behind the ear while they eat.

787
788 These past years the cult of the Kumēnti was clearly declining among the Boni, as was the whole of their religious life; every one, indeed, no longer thought about anything but earning money and was always traveling in order to do this, which made difficult the indispensable meetings and dances. On the other hand, cared for effectively when they are ill in the Maripasoula hospital, the Boni feel the cult of the Kumēnti less necessary, of which the principal social function is to cure. So, while in 1948 we used to be present very often at manifestations of the gita of Kumēnti, in 1952 they were becoming much rarer and more secret /modest/. They were tending to fall to the level of the latent manifestations of which we shall speak further on. In 1956 we did not observe in the course of the forest work any spontaneous attack of this gita. The chapels dedicated to the Kumēnti are scarcely maintained and are falling into ruins; such is the fate of the gods judged benevolent toward men. [346] Nevertheless people continue to lay great store by the obia of [751] Kumēnti, especially the man nēge obia which protects against the machete and the gun, and the Kumēnti bui, ring of Kumēnti, instrument of divination.

776
[823] The Būnsuḡki. The Būnsuḡki are gods which live in the waters, by preference at the head of falls, beside rocks bearing corpses of detached trees; they can also reside ordinarily in these trees themselves. They appear sometimes in dreams to men as well as to women in the aspect of Indians, more commonly Indian women with long hair. This is why they are sometimes called [787] wata Inḡi, Indians of The water.

725 cont. /

784 One sees from this example how the influence of women,
613 exerted in arbitrary fashion, in a domain placed outside of
787 custom and ordinary social life, weighs on the life of the
562 group.

784 Kunu of the Dipélu lineage. The situation of the Dipélu
614 lineage with respect to the kunu is particularly interesting.
571 Although split for perhaps 100 years into two separate groups,
Dipélu I (L'Enfant Perdu and Apatu villages) and Dipélu II
(Kormotibo and Asisi-Dip. II villages), this group still constitutes
an undivided unit with respect to the kunu. Neither time nor
• [484] distance (it takes more than a week of traveling to make the
round trip between L'Enfant Perdu and Apatu) has been able to
[755] break it up. The Apatu people come very often (at least some
of them) to be present at the collective prayers which take
place at L'Enfant Perdu to appease a kunu in order to cure a
sick person.

784 The oldest kunu ("since Africa") is that of a Papa gadu
614 god whose bearer was O Dika (Dip. I, D10, † 1951) and which
226 passed after her death into O Pééchina (Dip. I, E42, L'Enfant
[787] Perdu village). This kunu strikes indiscriminately the people
of L'Enfant Perdu, Apatu, Kormotibo, Asisi-Dip. II, and the
Dipélu fraction residing in Boniville. To it, these past years,
[761] have been attributed the death of O Way (Dip. I, E6, living
[753] in Boniville), the illness of Δ Akwali (Dip. II, F7, Kormotibo
village) and of O Bongo (same village).

784 Another very old kunu is the one exercised by the yorka
775 of a Surinam Creole who had settled with the Dipélu people a
614 very long time ago. He was suspected of sorcery and killed.
[693] Since then his yorka comes back regularly to exterminate the
Dipélu.